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Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 121: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Management and central support services

Section 27A. Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

Section 27B. Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts

Section 27C. Office of Human Resources Management

Section 27D. Office of Central Support Services

Section 27E. Administration, Geneva

Section 27F. Administration, Vienna

Section 27G. Administration, Nairobi

Section 26. Public information (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda Item 121: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*) A/53/955; A/54/6/Rev. 1, A/54/7 and A/54/16; A/C.5/54/1, A/C.5/54/21 and A/C.5/54/25)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Management and central services

Section 27A. Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

Section 27B. Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts

Section 27C. Office of Human Resources Management

Section 27D. Office of Central Support Services

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Section 27F. Administration, Vienna

Section 27G. Administration, Nairobi

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on part VIII, comprising sections 27 to 27G, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/7 (chap. II, part VIII)). Section 27, along with its subsections, accounted for the largest share of the regular budget resources requested, some $460.1 million, or about 17 per cent. That estimate represented a net resource reduction of $4.2 million. Extrabudgetary resources projected for common support services amounted to almost $83 million. A total of 2,106 posts, including 584 posts to be funded from extrabudgetary resources, were proposed.

2. With respect to section 27A, he said that the Advisory Committee considered that there was a need to examine the workload of all bodies dealing with the administration of justice to determine whether additional support was warranted. The Advisory Committee had questioned the staff resources proposed under all sections of the proposed programme budget, including section 27B, for the maintenance of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). Specifically, it saw no rationale for financing those positions from general temporary assistance rather than proposing temporary or even established posts, and had requested that the matter should be reviewed in the context of the next budget proposals.

3. Turning to section 27C, he said that the Organization's personnel practices and policies required urgent attention by the Secretariat and Member States, and had been a major subject of concern to the Advisory Committee. Its views on the issue were contained in chapter II, paragraphs VIII.32 and VIII.33, and chapter I, paragraphs 98 to 105, of its report. He drew attention to the note by the Secretary-General on personnel practices and policies (A/C.5/54/21), which had been submitted pursuant to a request by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 104 of its report.

4. Paragraphs VIII.24 to VIII.29 and VIII.80 of the Advisory Committee's report dealt with training, for which almost $20 million had been requested. An evaluation of all United Nations training programmes undertaken pursuant to the request made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph VIII.59 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7/Rev.1) had shown that those programmes were of high quality, well designed and cost-effective. The Advisory Committee requested that the shortcomings identified in the evaluation should be addressed, in particular those relating to the decentralization of training programmes to individual departments and offices, and that there should be greater transparency in the presentation of training programmes and related costs in the next budget proposals.

5. With respect to section 27D, he said that the use of information technology in support services would provide invaluable benefits to the Secretariat and Member States. However, the United Nations was far behind the funds and programmes in establishing a coordinated, integrated strategy on information technology reform. Indeed, there appeared to be no overall vision and no leadership. The recent appointment of a new Director of the Information Technology Services Division was a step forward, but the Advisory Committee had been warned that, because of the absence for years of real policies in that area, time and effort would be required to fully develop an effective Organization-wide strategy. The Advisory

Committee concluded, in paragraph 92 of its report, that a strategy should be developed as a matter of urgency and that change should mean not only the purchase of hardware and software, but also a concerted and sustained effort to inculcate the culture of information technology throughout the Secretariat.

6. Another major subject of concern was common services. In response to its enquiry regarding the progress of the common services project resulting from the proposals of the Secretary-General on reform (A/51/950), the Advisory Committee had been informed that there had been several meetings by a number of working groups. The Advisory Committee cautioned in paragraph VIII.57 of its report that too many working groups holding too many meetings and discussing a large variety of subjects might be a recipe for protracted discussions and ultimate failure. Priority should be given to services that were good candidates for common delivery using the criteria of efficiency, productivity, and cost-effectiveness. Where it had been determined that those requirements had been fulfilled but there was reluctance to proceed, Member States should be informed in order to provide legislative guidance.

7. Vienna was more experienced than either New York or Geneva in the delivery of joint or common services, including the capacity to develop workload performance indicators for determining billing rates for those services. In paragraph VIII.94, the Advisory Committee expanded on its views on determining services that should be considered for joint or common delivery.

8. Regarding section 27F, he drew attention to the Advisory Committee's observations in paragraphs VIII.98 and VIII.99 of its report on building management in general and on the Vienna International Centre complex in particular.

9. With regard to section 27G, he noted that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/220, the Secretary-General had made a commitment to increase gradually the regular budget component of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), with a view to easing the administrative costs levied on the substantive programmes of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). There was a need to refine the methodology used to estimate the workload connected with the performance of services by UNON on behalf of UNEP and Habitat and the related cost. The efficiency of the charge-back arrangement needed careful monitoring, and the Advisory Committee had therefore requested the Board of Auditors to pay particular attention to that issue in its next audit of the regular budget for the current biennium. It recommended the approval of four additional posts proposed by the Secretary-General for the Division of Administrative Services, Nairobi.

10. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) introduced the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on sections 27 to 27G of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 contained in paragraphs 437 to 441 of its report (A/54/16). In paragraph 439 of its report the Committee had recommended to the General Assembly that it should request the Secretary-General to reformulate the narrative of section 27C in accordance with its resolution 53/221. The revised narrative was contained in document A/C.5/54/17. The Committee had emphasized, in paragraph 437, that the responsibilities and workload of the secretariat of CPC, which also served as the secretariat of the Fifth Committee, should have been clearly spelled out in the programme narrative, and it recommended, in paragraph 438, that the General Assembly should continue to consider the issue at its current session, in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of section 1B (section III) of its resolution 52/220.

11. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia on sections 27 through 27G, said that efficiency and effectiveness had increased in a number of areas, resulting in aggregate savings of $4.2 million under part VIII. In other areas, however, further progress could be made.

12. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management should play the leading role in planning efficiency and cost-saving measures. His delegation wished to have more information on the objectives of the Oversight Support Unit established within the Office and on the ad hoc assignments it carried out (A/54/6/Rev.1, para. 27A.25). It has taken note of the recommendation of ACABQ regarding the posts in the Unit.

13. The European Union was deeply concerned at the number of cases pending before the Joint Appeals Board. Staff were entitled to timely resolution of appeals. Delays adversely affected staff morale, undermined the principle of cost-effectiveness and could jeopardize the proper application of the Staff Rules. The European Union therefore agreed with ACABQ that there was a need to examine the workload of all bodies dealing with the administration of justice to determine whether enough resources were allocated to that area.

14. With respect to section 27B, his delegation concurred with ACABQ that the Secretary-General should review the mode of financing of the posts in the Peacekeeping Financing Division, which were currently funded from the support account, and report on the matter in the context of the next budget estimates. It also agreed that the four posts required for core maintenance of IMIS should be approved as temporary posts rather than financed from general temporary assistance. He requested more detailed information regarding the role and functions of the Accounts Division, and asked whether further efficiencies could be identified in the Division.

15. The European Union had long supported human resources management reform. It remained concerned at the slow implementation of delegation of authority. While it was pleased to note that the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) had begun to develop a monitoring capacity, it agreed with the observation of ACABQ in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7/Rev.1) that the monitoring of implementation of delegated authority should be streamlined. It also shared the Advisory Committee's concern at the lack of progress in streamlining personnel actions and processes, which were currently excessively cumbersome, time consuming and very costly. The simplification of procedures, reinforced by the use of modern technology, could resolve the bulk of that inefficiency.

16. He requested clarification regarding the high level of resources requested for travel under section 27C. The schedule of meetings of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee was one area where savings might be achieved. His delegation welcomed the high priority placed by the Secretary-General on training. However, it wished to have more information on the types of training that staff would be receiving, and it considered that there was a need for performance indicators to evaluate the impact of training.

17. Turning to section 27D, he said that the European Union supported IMIS and the conversion of the 29 IMIS positions, which were currently financed from general temporary assistance, to established posts. It was to be hoped that the system's transition from the developmental to the operational phase would lead to further cost savings. The European Union agreed with the recommendation of ACABQ that the cost and benefits of information technology should be clearly presented under each section of the budget, as appropriate. It also endorsed the Advisory Committee's request in paragraph VIII.44 of its report concerning the establishment of a single organizational unit for IMIS and information technology services. It looked forward to receiving more information about the outcome of the feasibility study on the upgrading of the optical disk system (ODS). It concurred with ACABQ that, with the application of ODS, Internet and Extranet technology, it should be possible to establish more efficient electronic document support in conference rooms.

18. The European Union had supported the common services project resulting from the proposals of the Secretary-General on reform (A/51/950). It considered that procurement, information technology, personnel services, security and safety, and, in particular, printing services, were good candidates for common delivery. Common services should be given system-wide priority. The General Assembly should take an active and positive approach, and Member States should request the cooperation of the organizations concerned with a view to breaking down the barriers that existed to closer cooperation. The Administrative Committee on Coordination might play a coordinating role.

19. With respect to section 27E, he said that the European Union agreed with ACABQ that there was no need to establish vacancy management units because IMIS would be able to track the vacancy situation in a timely fashion, and concurred with its views on the proposed abolition of nine posts and on the large increase in the provisions under contractual services. Regarding section 27F, he commended the arrangements made for the provision of common services by the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), and asked whether the Secretariat would apply the lessons learned at other duty stations. He looked forward to the inclusion in the next proposed

programme budget of the results of the application of the new methodology for charging the United Nations Drug Control Programme for services provided by UNOV. The European Union concurred with the views of ACABQ regarding the post upgrades proposed under the section.

20. Referring to section 27G, he welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to increase gradually the regular budget component of UNON, with a view to easing the administrative costs levied on the substantive programmes of UNEP and Habitat. The European Union agreed with ACABQ that a mechanism should be established for determining the total costs of UNON and how they should be apportioned. Common delivery of services should be pursued. The European Union concurred with the observations of ACABQ in paragraphs VIII.116 to VIII.118 of its report regarding the charge-back procedure.

21. **Ms. Merchant** (Norway), speaking on sections 27 through 27G, said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. It welcomed the savings made under section 27 and its subsections and wished to encourage still greater efficiency and effectiveness. It attached great importance to the role of the Oversight Support Unit and supported the recommendation of ACABQ regarding the posts in the Unit. The number of cases pending before the Joint Appeals Board was a cause for concern, and her delegation agreed with ACABQ that there was a need to examine the workload of all bodies dealing with the administration of justice to determine whether enough resources were allocated to that area. It also concurred with the Advisory Committee that the practice of funding posts in the Peacekeeping Finance Division from the support account should be reviewed.

22. Her delegation welcomed the ongoing process of human resources management reform and the development of a capacity for monitoring the implementation of delegation of authority. It strongly supported the Secretary-General's view that staff training was an essential element in the modernization of the Organization. It considered that the organizations of the United Nations system could cooperate more closely with one another in the provision of support services, and that ACC could play a positive role in that respect.

23. Her delegation had long advocated the strengthening of UNON, the only United Nations office located in a developing country. The proposed resource growth of over 15 per cent under section 27G was in line with the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and would reduce the burden on the substantive programmes of UNEP and Habitat. Her delegation agreed with ACABQ that a methodology should be established for determining the costs of UNON and how they should be apportioned.

24. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27A of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

25. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation wished to reiterate its support for the decision by the Bureau to consider the proposed programme budget section by section. With regard to section 27A, she would appreciate the Secretariat's assessment of the experience acquired since the establishment of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management in the context of the Secretary-General's reform package. She also wished to have more information on the nature of the interaction between the Oversight Support Unit and the three main oversight bodies. It was stated, in paragraph 27A.27 (d) (iii) of the proposed programme budget that the Unit prepared updated status reports on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors and of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). She wondered why no reference was made in the paragraph to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Her delegation shared the concern of ACABQ at the build-up of backlog cases for the Joint Appeals Board. She would like to have updated information on the status of the cases pending before the Board and on the measures being taken by the Secretariat to enhance the administration of justice.

26. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked whether expected accomplishments would be included under section 27A in future budget proposals or whether some other means of tracking progress towards established goals would be found. Noting that $90,000 had been requested for travel, he requested information on expenditure on travel during the current biennium and on any savings achieved through more cost-effective travel arrangements. He would welcome clarification regarding the role of the Oversight Support Unit. He also wished to know what kind of

administrative support was provided to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

27. **Mr. Takahara** (Japan) said that his delegation welcomed the overall reduction of 0.9 per cent in the resource requirements for section 27 and its subsections, and took note of the net increase of 17 posts to be funded from the regular budget. With respect to section 27A, he said that the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management and the Management Policy Office had special responsibility for promoting efficient and effective management, streamlining administrative processes, improving programme delivery and ensuring an integrated approach throughout the Secretariat. He sought clarification regarding the work to be assigned to the consultants and experts referred to in paragraph 27A.18, since the Management Policy Office already appeared to have expertise in the areas enumerated in that paragraph. His delegation recognized the need to facilitate the work of the three main oversight bodies and follow up their recommendations. However, it considered that the proposed inward redeployment of one P-5 post to the Oversight Support Unit had not been adequately explained. The Secretariat must be able to point to a considerably increased workload or identified weaknesses and anticipated inconveniences. With respect to paragraph 27A.31, he asked whether the additional resource requirement relating to investment management software licences was likely to be recurrent.

28. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) asked how the functions of the immediate office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management described in paragraph 27A.5 differed from those of the Executive Office of the Department of Management referred to in paragraph 27A.43. He requested information on the distribution of posts among the various appeal bodies.

29. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the Secretariat would provide information on the workload statistics of the administration of justice bodies for the past three years in informal consultations. It was difficult to provide a breakdown of the work assigned to the individual posts shown in table 27A.11 because the unit was a very small one, and it was impossible to identify a single post with a single function.

30. The purpose of the Oversight Support Unit was not to provide services for the oversight bodies but to ensure that their recommendations were implemented throughout the Secretariat. The recommendations of JIU, once approved, were tracked in exactly the same way as those of the other oversight bodies. Much internal coordination was required in order to ensure that such recommendations resulted in changes in Secretariat working methods: that was the Unit's function. Some administrative support services were provided to the Rwanda Tribunal, using extrabudgetary support funds.

31. The additional resources of $59,500 relating to investment management software licences was a recurrent expenditure since most such licences ran for about a year. The amount might seem high but the Organization's cash management had been greatly improved by using the software during the current biennium. During the next biennium bank interest earned was expected to grow from $900,000 to about $3 million.

32. The immediate office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management was a very small unit providing services to ensure an even flow of the Department's substantive work. Its function was very different from that of the Department's Executive Office. Each Secretariat department usually had an executive office providing human resources management and financial management services.

33. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the various functions of the administration of justice unit might involve a conflict of interest between, for example, the provision of advice to the Secretary-General about staff grievances and the servicing of the administration of justice bodies themselves.

34. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he would provide full details on the question in informal consultations, but it was precisely to avoid such conflicts of interest that the unit was not located in the Office of Human Resources Management.

35. **The Chairman** said that she took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 27A of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration.

36. *It was so decided.*

37. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27B of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

38. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation would like to know the purpose of the provision of $20,900 referred to in paragraph 27B.11 and the equivalent level of spending under the current biennium. It would also like to know what the "significant workload indicators" listed in paragraph 27B.17 were used for.

39. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), referring to the source of funds for the Peacekeeping Financing Division, said that in the context of the 1996-1997 budget proposals the Secretariat had proposed shifting some posts in the Division and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations from the support account to the regular budget. That proposal had not been approved by the General Assembly, and the Secretariat had been reluctant to revisit the issue in the context of the current and next programme budgets. However, if there was significant support in the Committee it would consider doing so in the proposals for the biennium 2002-2003.

40. The Secretariat was of course always seeking greater efficiency: for example, under the last two budgets it had achieved a reduction of half a dozen or so posts in the Accounts Division. The Division's work was basically to keep the Organization's books. He would provide full details of its activities in writing in informal consultations.

41. There was always a provision for outside ad hoc expertise, which might be needed on a contingency basis, for example in cases of fraud or forged signatures. None of the funds allocated for the current biennium had yet been used. The workload indicators were designed simply to measure increases or decreases in the volume of work done.

42. **The Chairman** said that she took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 27B of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration.

43. *It was so decided.*

44. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27C of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

45. **Mr. Orr** (Canada), referring to section 27C, noted that the Advisory Committee remained of the view that, in spite of the many past stated goals of streamlining administrative and personnel action processes and procedures in human resources management, little progress appeared to have been achieved so far (A/54/7, para. VIII.32). The rationale for investing in information technology was to make an organization more efficient, but sometimes such investment merely automated existing processes. For example, the Office of Human Resources Management was planning to automate over 100 personnel forms. His delegation agreed strongly with the Advisory Committee that the Secretariat should first review and simplify its procedures, thus reducing the number of forms to be automated. The lesson learned from the implementation of IMIS was that the automation of a cumbersome system resulted in a modern but still cumbersome system. His delegation sought assurances from the Office that its procedures would be reviewed.

46. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation welcomed the note by the Secretary-General containing a reformulated narrative of section 27C (A/C.5/54/17) issued in response to a request by CPC for the programme narrative to be harmonized with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221, especially with respect to the delegation of authority. However, the revised narrative did not reflect the concerns expressed by delegations in CPC and would have to be considered in detail in informal consultations.

47. Paragraph 27C.34 referred to certain activities connected with the Working Group on Personnel Services. The initiative was commendable, but there was no reference to the legislative mandate for it. Furthermore, resolution 53/221 did not give the Secretariat a free hand to implement the Secretary-General's proposals on the reform of human resources management before establishing an accountable and sound system for the delegation of authority. The establishment of such a system did not receive much attention in the programme narrative.

48. Her delegation welcomed the proposed increased resources for staff training and development but endorsed the comments of the Advisory Committee concerning the constant uptrend in resources required for such activities and the lack of clear presentation of the real needs or of the use of the resources.

49. **Mr. Fedorov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had already drawn attention to the considerable growth of resources for staff training and development. Training programmes should be designed to equip the staff with knowledge and skills directly connected with the performance of their duties. Pursuant to Article 101 of the Charter the Secretary-General should recruit only highly qualified persons; Member States would not want to spend resources for training any other kind of person. It was not acceptable that resources should be spent on general training and development. The United Nations was not a training centre but a very important political Organization required to carry out very difficult tasks.

50. **Mr. Nee** (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's programme for reform of human resources management — a complicated undertaking which could not be accomplished overnight. Staff training and development was the essential ingredient for the necessary change in organizational culture, and increased training needs were the main element underlying the increase requested for the Office of Human Resources Management.

51. The description of the training and staff development programmes, although verbose, did not give a sense of how the funds were to be spent; his delegation needed more quantitative details in order to judge whether a programme was reasonable and measure the achievement of the goals. In short, it required more justification for the increased request. It would like to know in particular whether advantage was taken of the facilities offered by the ILO training centre in Italy.

52. In paragraph 27C.13, $267,800 was requested for travel of management and staff participants to the Staff-Management Coordination Committee; $95,000 of that amount represented resource growth attributable to the decision of that Committee to meet twice a year. Such a programme expansion and its budgetary implications had not been endorsed by CPC or the Fifth Committee and should be deleted. With regard to paragraph 27C.16, his delegation did not believe that hospitality or representation funds should be used by the staff to entertain each other and it would welcome an explanation of the representation funds requested for use in connection with the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. Perhaps the salary surveys referred to in paragraph 27C.36(c) should more properly be carried out by the International Civil Service Commission. With regard to the purchase of a biochemistry analyser at a cost of $180,000 (para. 27C.55), he asked whether it would not be more cost-effective to use the services of a private laboratory. Lastly, his delegation would welcome an explanation of why the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General needed a provision of $42,800, at maintenance level, to cover external printing of forms and stationery (para. 27C.14); a requirement of such magnitude for stationery was unique.

53. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) said that his delegation generally endorsed the comments of the Advisory Committee on section 27C. The delegation of authority was of critical importance for the Office of Human Resources Management, and his delegation took note of the Secretariat's assurance that no delegation of the Office's responsibilities would proceed until clear guidelines were in place and its staff had received the necessary training. The observation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph VIII.42 of document A/52/7/Rev.1 remained valid and should be complied with.

54. With regard to the 30 per cent increase in the staff training and development budget, while everyone would agree that the Organization depended on the quality of its staff and while his delegation fully supported the priority given to training, it must be remembered that training was not completed when merely implemented: it was a continuing feedback loop. Its results must be measured against objectives, and the conclusions then fed back to the planning stage of the next round. The number of participants in a training programme was only a minor performance indicator, and more of a qualitative evaluation was required.

55. Furthermore, training itself was not a goal but rather an integral part of a strategic plan for human resources development. The Office should draw up such a plan. The recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in its previous report on the comprehensive evaluation of all training programmes should be acted upon without delay and the findings made available.

56. His delegation appreciated the Office's efforts to rectify the geographical imbalance in the Secretariat. The usefulness of the national competitive examination programme had been reaffirmed repeatedly by the

General Assembly. The projection of the Operational Services Division (para. 27C.23(c)) that 200 successful candidates would be placed annually during the biennium was certainly an ambitious one. As a seriously under-represented country, Japan had of course no objection to setting such a goal but would welcome comparable data for the current or previous biennium. It would also like to know the Office's thinking about means of streamlining competitive entry processes (para. 27C.31) and the justification for the requested increase in general and temporary assistance (para. 27C.25) as an alternative to establishing permanent posts; it requested more information about the career resource centres referred to in paragraph 27C.59 (d).

57. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that only minimal changes had been proposed in the programme narrative for section 27C as a result of the adoption of resolution 53/221. He was aware that the implications of the resolution were of considerable concern to delegations; a representative of OHRM would provide greater detail in informal consultations.

58. The training provided was highly varied: there had always been language training in the Organization but in recent years the emphasis had increasingly shifted in favour of management development and information technology to enable the Secretariat to make full use of new technology. Although some funding for training was centrally administered, for example, for management training, separate allocations were made by OHRM to the various departments for substantive skills development. Reflecting the Secretary-General's concern that there should be greater emphasis on training within the Organization, an expansion of training funds in an amount of $1 million had been requested — an increase of 10 per cent.

59. In terms of the size of its payroll, the Organization had historically placed rather light emphasis on training. The Advisory Committee had recommended that an external evaluation of training within the Organization should be carried out and a report had been submitted to ACABQ and could be made available as background information.

60. The Staff-Management Coordination Committee, a forum which allowed management and staff from different duty stations to meet had been in place for 10 years or more and had proved its worth as a means of enabling managers to become aware of the staff viewpoint, thus avoiding unnecessary conflict and ensuring a harmonious working environment. It had been decided that it would be useful to increase the frequency of the meetings from once to twice a year, and a request for increased travel funds had accordingly been made.

61. The request for an amount for hospitality contained in paragraph 27C.16 was related to a number of events, including meetings of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. With reference to the need for a hospitality allowance, it was necessary, in the course of negotiations between staff and management, to be able to relax the atmosphere a little as the negotiations were sometimes difficult. Like the Fifth Committee, the Staff-Management Coordination Committee frequently continued to work long after normal working hours.

62. A request had been made for general temporary assistance rather than new posts. In connection with ongoing maintenance operations for the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) as it was not yet possible to be certain how many established posts IMIS would ultimately require; it had therefore been thought preferable to request funds in a flexible manner. The long-term requirement for maintenance of the human resources aspect of IMIS would, however, require established posts.

63. Regarding the purchase of a biochemistry analyser for the Medical Service (A/54/6/Rev.1 (vol. III, para. 27C.55)), it had been determined that the cost of individual tests could be avoided by the purchase of the equipment, which would, in the long run, result in a cost-benefit advantage.

64. A question had been asked concerning the sum of $42,800 stated in paragraph 27C.14 to be for the external printing of forms and stationery used by the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General. In fact, the provision was related to items used by OHRM as a whole and was not confined to the small number of staff who actually worked in that Office.

65. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27D of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

66. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) began by reminding the Secretariat of the request she had made the previous

month for a copy of the contract of the catering firm, which she had still not received.

67. Her delegation recognized that it was essential for the Organization to have good security but was concerned at the high cost of the arrangements made. In particular, she asked on what basis resources were being requested for security dogs. She had asked for that information previously but had not received any satisfactory response. She wondered whether the resources assigned for that purpose really corresponded to the needs of Member States and asked why the resources were not used to pay for additional security guards.

68. It appeared that, early in October, there had been a meeting between officials of the United Nations and representatives of the New York Police Department. She asked the Secretariat for an explanation of the linkage between the United Nations and the police in New York City.

69. It was well known that gifts were frequently presented to the Secretary-General which clearly belonged to the United Nations and not to him personally. She asked to be provided with a list of such gifts together with details of where they were kept and what their value was.

70. Referring to articles that had appeared in the press concerning the condition of the United Nations Headquarters building, she said that her delegation was concerned at the possible danger from asbestos particles in the air that might be spread throughout the building in the heating and air-conditioning system. In particular, she asked whether the quality of the air was regularly checked and whether tests were made to determine whether asbestos particles were a health factor within the building.

71. On a related subject, she said that notices had been posted in the Delegates' Lounge prohibiting smoking and asked on whose authority they had been displayed since they appeared not to have been properly authorized.

72. **Mr. Nee** (United States of America) referred to a finding by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/54/393, para. 96) that the Administration had been overcharging users for long-distance telephone calls and that, over time, a related surplus of approximately $8.5 million had accrued. That constituted an unbudgeted surplus, and its use to purchase telephone and related equipment and services was an unauthorized use of surplus funds. According to the OIOS report, management had informed the Office that steps had been taken to address its recommendations in that regard. He asked what steps had been taken, what the status of the $8.5 million surplus was and how it was reflected in the accounts.

73. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) asked the Secretariat to provide information concerning the United Nations Common Services Task Force, in particular its composition, its functions, the results obtained, and how its work was related to the Office of Central Support Services.

74. With reference to paragraph 27D.6, she asked the Secretariat to provide further details of the reductions in resource requirements and of the cost-saving measures and the savings in operational costs they had yielded.

75. The Secretariat had stated at various times that more rigorous security and safety arrangements were necessary for the Organization but it appeared that the resources set aside for that purpose and the number of posts remained substantially the same. She therefore asked what operational changes were planned in security and safety arrangements and how the arrangements related to the needs of Member States. On the subject of training in the area of security, she asked what unit was responsible for providing training and what criteria had been used to select it. Referring to the closed circuit television security system, she asked what criteria had been used for the location of security cameras and what measures were taken to protect the confidentiality of information in areas where such cameras were placed.

76. On the subject of dogs used for security purposes, she asked the Secretariat to provide information in writing on whether the dogs were provided by a contractor or had been purchased, on the comparative costs involved, on the bidding process and on the terms of the contract. She also wanted to know whether the security staff of the United Nations were capable of defusing any explosive devices that might be detected by the dogs.

77. Her delegation also wished the Secretariat to provide information on the United Nations optical disk system, particularly concerning its effectiveness, its practical usefulness and the level of utilization by Member States.

78. Her delegation noted the increase in resources requested for the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) because of the need to hire temporary staff. She asked whether the upward trend would continue, and enquired about interconnectivity between peacekeeping operations, the tribunals, and IMIS.

79. In relation to the cafeteria and restaurants, she asked for details of the contract and wanted to know, why, following the refurbishment of the cafeteria, prices had increased without any apparent corresponding improvement in the quality of the food or the service provided.

80. In conclusion, she supported the representative of Costa Rica concerning the need to ensure that any refurbishment of the Secretariat building took into account health requirements, in particular to safeguard the staff and the representatives of Member States working in the building.

81. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) noted with concern the observation by ACABQ (A/54/7, para. VIII.43) that the IMIS budget estimates were not transparent enough. The contribution of IMIS to the efficient management of the Organization and the expected cost savings should be presented in parallel with resource and post requirements. It would also be useful if the budget estimates included a breakdown of recurrent and non-recurrent costs. For a Secretariat-wide programme such as IMIS, Member States should be given a clear overall picture that included programme and budgetary implications and a multi-year phased timetable.

82. His delegation wished to know whether there were guidelines for the provision and replacement of information equipment throughout the Secretariat. In conclusion, he said that the General Service staffing levels should be reviewed in the light of the measures taken to reduce workloads, such as the introduction of electronic office equipment.

83. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) recalled that, when IMIS had first been proposed, various statements had been made on the increased efficiency and the reduction in support costs that it would make possible. It had been anticipated that IMIS would radically alter the way in which the Organization managed its administrative tasks, in particular by reducing duplication, and that it would yield substantial savings. In spite of the expectation of substantial savings the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 envisaged an increase in costs for maintenance.

84. At the same time, he felt that there must have been some reduction in costs related to the phasing out of the old computer system and to the reduction in overlapping and duplicated tasks. When IMIS had first been proposed it had been stated that there were 22 computer systems which were not part of an integrated management system and necessitated considerable rekeying of data. He therefore requested information on the savings that had already been achieved through IMIS and on future savings that were expected in the next biennium and thereafter.

85. In that connection he noted that the section of the ACABQ report (A/54/7) concerning information technology included a table showing expenditure on information technology maintenance. He asked what proportion related to IMIS.

86. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the table in question included a column relating to ISCC and IMIS. Maintenance of IMIS came under section 27, within which the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Central Support Services all had a share in terms of IMIS. No more detailed breakdown of maintenance costs was available.

87. In response to the question as to the expected savings from IMIS, he pointed out that the system would not be fully installed until the end of 2000. It would therefore be some time before the shakedown period was completed and cost savings were apparent.

88. Guidelines on the replacement of information technology equipment would be made available in informal consultations. In essence, the system provided for the replacement of personal computers on a standardized basis.

89. The recent adjustment to prices in the cafeteria was unrelated to the refurbishing of the facility. It was one of the several price adjustments provided for in the contract which the Organization had signed with the service provider.

90. With reference to the anti-explosive detection services, it had been found to be less expensive to lease the services of an explosive-sniffing dog and its handler than to purchase the dog and employ its handler. Information on the cost of the dog, the value of the contract and other related issues had been provided to the Advisory Committee. On the issue of

security in general, the Advisory Committee had requested the preparation and submission to it by the spring of 2000 of a comprehensive expert survey of security needs of United Nations facilities and the capacity of the Organization to address them, together with an indication of the related resource requirements.

91. As for the health concerns which had been raised, in order to ensure the safety of staff, regular tests were conducted of air and water quality as well as of the level of electromagnetic interference in the Secretariat buildings.

92. On the issue of overcharging for long-distance telephone service from Headquarters, it must be acknowledged that the current system was based on antiquated software which resulted in charges that were high relative to the cost of the long-distance services provided by outside vendors. Steps were being taken to remedy the situation, although it must be borne in mind that certain indirect costs also had to be met.

93. Lastly, with regard to the cafeteria contract, the opinion of the Office of Legal Affairs was being sought on the appropriateness of publishing contracts with vendors.

94. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the proposed programme budget had not identified the costs related to the development and maintenance of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) at the regional commissions. It would be helpful if the Secretariat could provide that information.

95. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27E of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

96. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) welcomed the proposed reduction in resources under section 27E, which had been made possible through increased automation and the streamlining of procedures. His delegation hoped that similar reductions could be achieved at other duty stations. On the question of staff development and post requirements, his Government could not support the request for additional resources. It was difficult, for example, to justify the hiring of 15 full-time language teachers at Geneva, when there were comparatively few such teachers at other duty stations. In that connection, it would be useful to know whether an integrated policy on language training existed.

97. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) welcomed the absence of any proposals for increases under section 27E of the proposed programme budget. His delegation believed, however, that there was still scope for further reform and greater efficiency and would pursue the matter in informal consultations.

98. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 27F of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

99. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) noted that Vienna was more advanced in the provision of joint and/or common services than either New York or Geneva, including the capacity to develop workload performance indicators for determining billing rates for common or joint services. The lessons learned from Vienna should be applied to other duty stations.

100. His delegation was of the view that the proposed consultancy services in connection with a bidding exercise for the group medical insurance plan administered by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) were unnecessary.

Section 26. Public information (continued)

101. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that his delegation endorsed the views of the Advisory Committee and of CPC on section 26 of the proposed programme budget. The year 2001 had been designated as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and, in a world that was increasingly interdependent, any expenditure on the promotion of mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation was well justified.

102. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made previously by the representatives of the European Union, Japan, the United States, Israel and Canada. The Organization's public information function should promote its priority activities and it was therefore odd that more resources had been proposed for section 26 than for any of the eight priority areas identified in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. The Secretariat should provide a breakdown of how public information resources had been distributed among those priority areas. The fact that the increase requested was modest was precisely why his delegation had difficulty in supporting the request. It should surely be possible to meet the proposed increase through more efficient management and leadership.

103. On the question of the relationship between public information and information technology, his delegation noted the Advisory Committee's continuing concerns about the exploitation of electronic publications and about the precise mix of in-house and external printing. One of the most significant recent developments, which had done more than anything else to make the activities of the United Nations more accessible and transparent, had been the establishment without additional resources of the United Nations web site. His delegation remained concerned, however, at the apparent lack of coordination in the establishment and maintenance of other web sites within the United Nations system.

104. The Advisory Committee had noted that the extent to which the United Nations was investing in new technology could not be precisely determined since not enough information was contained in the proposed programme budget. Efficiencies and savings that resulted from the introduction of information technology should be clearly identified in the budget proposals. The Secretariat should also expedite the development of the comprehensive long-term information strategy called for by the Advisory Committee.

105. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed his delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and stressed the importance of the role played by information management in promoting global awareness of United Nations activities and the need to incorporate it fully into the medium-term plan. He emphasized, firstly, the need for equal emphasis to be placed on the various broadcasting and publishing media used by the United Nations, due attention being accorded to the conventional media. In that connection he proposed that the conventional media should be financed from the regular budget so as to reach a broader public in the developing countries. Secondly, he emphasized the need for equal prominence of web sites in the six official languages and urged that provision should be made for a post for coordination of the Arabic-language web site financed from the regular budget. In that connection, he expressed his delegation's concern regarding the use of general temporary assistance funds and the borrowing of short-term temporary staff to perform the task of coordinating the Arabic-language web site. His delegation attached particular importance to equivalence between the six official languages.

106. **Mr. Salamat** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and shared the views expressed by the representative of India in support of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. The issue was particularly important at the approach of the new millennium. His delegation therefore welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information (DPI) to strengthen its capacity to draw international attention to the dialogue among civilizations and to the proposed establishment of a web site devoted to the subject.

107. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said, with reference to the presentation of section 26 of the proposed programme budget, that the Department of Public Information had a geographical spread unlike that of any other department and its programme structure was not always congruent with that spread. Given the cross-cutting nature of its programming, it was inevitable that some programmes would be implemented by more than one unit of the Organization, a reality which ideally should be reflected in the presentation of the programme budget proposals. Any change to the programme structure of the section, however, would require changes to be made in the structure of the medium-term plan.

108. In the area of technological innovations, the main developments had been the establishment of the United Nations web site and the growing use of the Internet and of digital technology in photography and television production. The investment in digital technology was essential to ensure that programmes produced in-house were compatible with the formats and equipment used by external media disseminators. The development of on-line services would continue to involve all six official languages.

109. Concerning the staffing of the new on-line services, the Department had recourse to temporary and short-term assistance in order to retain maximum flexibility in responding to the rapid changes that were a characteristic of the sector. Over the long term, however, it hoped to formalize the staffing situation in that area.

110. With regard to the proposed pilot project for the establishment of the international broadcasting system, even though the programme budget proposals included seed capital for the project, the latter would not move forward unless the additional resources required could be raised from extrabudgetary sources.

111. Concerning the omission of the Conference on Restrictive Business Practices from the list of international meetings and conferences to be organized under the auspices of the United Nations in the biennium 2000-2001, such omissions sometimes occurred because of the way in which the mandates for the conferences were processed. DPI, however, would be providing support services for the Conference in question.

112. The increase in the amount budgeted for the travel expenses of the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General had been proposed as a result of previous overspending under that heading, including during the current biennium. It would therefore be prudent to ensure that adequate resources were provided for the Office in the biennium 2000-2001.

113. Some members had questioned the usefulness of having each year two separate issuances of the compilation of General Assembly resolutions. The first issuance took the form of a press release which became available shortly after the General Assembly completed the main part of its session. Many delegations found that early issuance to be extremely useful. The other issuance was the official record of the General Assembly and became available at a much later stage after the material had been edited and translated.

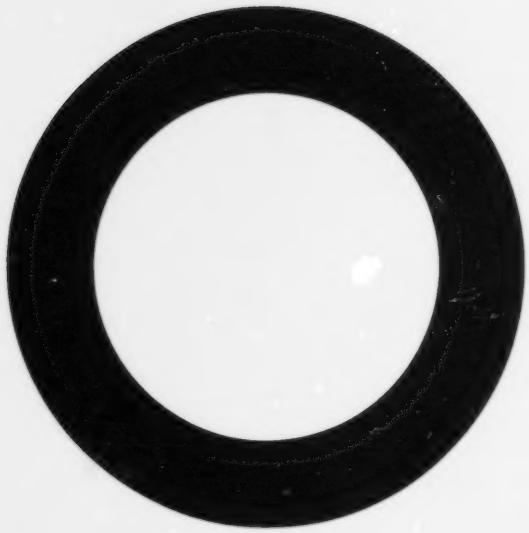
114. On the subject of media participation in the Main Committees of the General Assembly, journalists who were accredited to the Organization were free to cover and report on all open meetings of the United Nations. They did not have access, however, to closed meetings.

115. The proposed reduction in resources for information activities related to the question of Palestine was a purely technical adjustment and did not reflect any change in the Organization's priorities.

116. As for suggestions that the functions of DPI might overlap with those of other departments, such as the Office of External Relations in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, every effort was being made to enhance coordination with a view to avoiding duplication and overlap.

117. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that, in considering the activities which had been proposed in the field of public information, account should be taken of the technological gap that existed between Member States. Emphasis should not be placed solely on electronic bulletins, to which many Member States had only limited access. Many delegations depended on press releases and other documents in traditional print form. Member States should be more aware of the problems faced by some delegations.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.



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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 35th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 November 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
later: Mr. Sial (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Pakistan)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 121: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

First reading (*continued*)

Section 27. Management and central support services (*continued*)

Part IX. Internal oversight

Part X. Jointly financed administrative activities and special expenses

Section 28. Internal oversight

Section 29. Jointly financed administrative activities

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00-25493 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 121: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*) (A/54/6/Rev.1, A/54/7 and A/54/16; A/C.5/54/17 and A/C.5/54/21)

First reading (*continued*)

Section 27. Management and central support services (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group, which attached great importance to the human resources management subprogramme (section 27C of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001), considered that the Organization must provide the best possible conditions of employment for its staff, who, encouraged by a well-defined system of performance awards or bonuses, as well as penalties in case of underperformance, must, for their part, do their utmost to respond, through their performance, to the expectations of Member States.

2. With regard to delegation of authority, the Group of 77 and China emphasized that it must proceed in strict compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221. That was also true of human resources management reform, mentioned in paragraph 27C.19 of the proposed programme budget, and the use of consultants in the Secretariat (referred to in table 27C.13), since the guidelines contained in document A/53/385 had been amended by the General Assembly in section VIII of resolution 53/221 and should therefore only be applied in strict conformity with the provisions of that section. The Group of 77 and China regretted that the recommendation made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in paragraph 439 of its report (A/54/16) had not been implemented, in that the reformulated narrative (A/C.5/54/17) did not take sufficiently into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221. They would like the Secretariat to explain how the provisions of the resolution could be incorporated by reformulating one paragraph, rather than the entire narrative.

3. The issues raised in the note by the Secretary-General on personnel practices and policies (A/C.5/54/21) should be considered under the agenda item on human resources management (agenda item 164), and the Group therefore proposed that the note should be included among the documents pertaining to that item. Nevertheless, it wished to express its deep concern at the content of paragraph 10: to accept the Secretary-General's proposal would be tantamount to making the Secretariat part of the intergovernmental decision-making process, which was the exclusive prerogative of Member States. The Group was not therefore able to support the proposal made in paragraph 10 of document A/C.5/54/21.

4. With regard to section 27G of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (Administration, Nairobi), the Group of 77 and China were disappointed at the estimates of expenditure relating to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). They recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 52/220, had requested the Secretary-General "to bring the financial arrangements of the [...] Office [...] into line with those of similar United Nations administrative offices". The proposed programme budget stated (para. 27G.2) that the Secretary-General had made a commitment to increase gradually the regular budget component of the budget of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, but the Group noted with concern that the Office was still largely funded from extrabudgetary resources. It was important, however, that all United Nations centres should be treated equally, which was what had prompted the Governing Council to note, in paragraph 7, section 2, of its decision 20/31 (A/54/25), the large discrepancy in the amount of funding provided from the United Nations regular budget to the United Nations Office at Nairobi in relation to that provided to other United Nations offices. The Group of 77 and China wished to know what specific steps the Secretary-General had taken to give effect to resolution 52/220, particularly in terms of increasing the resources provided to the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The Group noted that a certain number of important posts at UNON were to be funded from extrabudgetary resources, which was cause for concern, since it was not certain that all of those resources would be forthcoming. It would like the Secretariat to indicate what would be done if those resources did not materialize.

5. Like the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/54/7, para. VIII.111), the Group was concerned to note that there was currently no agreed procedure for

determining the total cost of the Office and the rates for reimbursement of services rendered to other organizations at Nairobi. The costs relating to the Office should have been presented in a uniform manner before submission of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

6. The Group was concerned that there had been no change in the resources provided for conference services in Nairobi, which were vital for the operation of the Office. It requested that the necessary resources should be provided for the biennium 2000-2001 so as to ensure that Nairobi had a fully fledged United Nations office with conference services at the same level as those in other United Nations offices.

7. The charge-back procedure (paras. 27G.9 and 27G.41), which was cumbersome, unpredictable and lacked transparency, should be replaced by other, simpler and more reliable arrangements.

8. The Group wished to have information on the impact on the Office of the merger of administrative services, particularly with regard to administrative costs and programme delivery. It reiterated that reform should not take place at the expense of programme delivery.

9. The Group looked forward to receiving responses at a formal meeting to the questions it had raised and intended also to pursue them in informal consultations.

10. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Noting the high vacancy rate under section 27A, he asked what the reasons were for that situation and how the functions relating to those posts were being carried out. Similarly, he found no adequate explanation for the abolition of posts under the section. With regard to the Joint Appeals Board, he wished to know what stage the cases pending before the Board had reached. As for secretariat services for the Fifth Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, he was surprised to see that they were mentioned in only one line, although they were clearly services of paramount importance.

11. With regard to section 27B, Uganda supported the proposed resource growth. He would like to have a report on the progress made in implementing Release 3 of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which was so important for the budget. He noted that there was no well-developed formula for the determination of the amount that offices using the local area network (LAN) should contribute to maintenance, and he wished to have clarification of the matter. The fact that departments could now purchase their personal computers themselves was to be welcomed, but equipment of that type was disappearing from the Organization at such a rate that an explanation was called for from the Secretariat. Finally, although the review of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations would be welcome, it must be carried out in complete compliance with the resolutions of the General Assembly.

12. With regard to section 27C, Uganda agreed with the Advisory Committee (A/54/7, paras. VIII.32 and VIII.33) that it should be possible, with the use of new technologies, to eliminate the complexity and slowness of the procedures for transfer within and recruitment to the Secretariat, which led to high vacancy rates. Another problem raised in the section related to competitive examinations and career development: Uganda was concerned at the risk of a top-heavy Secretariat. Given the importance of training, the related resources should have been presented in a more transparent manner. As for delegation of authority, Uganda wished to associate itself with the view expressed at the previous meeting by Cuba and urged that the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph VIII.30 of its report should be clearly understood and strictly applied. Finally, it did not appear that sufficient progress had been made in streamlining the procedures of the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).

13. Regarding section 27D, Uganda wondered what the reasons were for the high vacancy rate and whether it was intended as a cost-cutting measure. As far as security and safety were concerned, his delegation fully supported the preparation of a comprehensive expert survey, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph VIII.39. It would like to have further information on the anti-explosive detection services.

14. The merger of IMIS and information technology services in a single organizational unit seemed rational, and his delegation wished to know what was preventing it. It was surprising, in that connection, that the estimated number of IMIS users was so low. The optical disk system was very widely used by missions, but they sometimes experienced difficulties in

connecting to it; once again, an explanation would be welcome.

15. Concerning common services, his delegation would like to have a detailed report on printing facilities at New York and Geneva. As for procurement, travel and transportation, it welcomed the fact that the Advisory Committee had requested the Board of Auditors to conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of procurement reform measures. Since the Organization used only one travel agency, it wished to hear a detailed explanation for that situation. It wondered whether that agency was fully aware of the potential difficulties of travelling in some parts of the world and it wanted to know what income the Organization received for the use of the offices occupied in the Secretariat by that agency.

16. With regard to facilities management, his delegation was concerned, like many other delegations, at the state of the Secretariat building, particularly the possible presence of asbestos and wished to have updated information on the matter.

17. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines), speaking on section 27C, paid tribute to the memory of the men and women who had given their lives in the service of the Organization, and again called on Member States to sign and ratify, as the Philippines had done, the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

18. Her delegation welcomed the importance accorded by the Secretary-General to training and staff development, and supported the resource growth proposed for the related programmes.

19. In line with its belief that the paramount consideration in the recruitment and promotion of staff should be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity, her delegation considered that the recruitment, appointment and promotion of staff should be made without distinction as to nationality, race, sex or religion, in accordance with the principles and purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Staff Regulations and Rules.

20. Her delegation had taken note of the reformulated narrative of section 27C (A/C.5/54/17), but wished to recall its serious reservations concerning resolution 53/221, section V, paragraph 22, which provided for the realignment with the national competitive examinations of the competitive examination for promotion from the General Service category to the Professional category. That provision would effectively deny General Service staff (the majority of whom were women), because of their nationality, the opportunity to be promoted to the Professional category through the competitive examination. Her delegation fully appreciated the efforts of those staff members to pursue university studies, at their own expense, in order to obtain a degree enabling them to qualify for the competitive examination. It considered that the examination should be regarded as a promotion exercise, not as a recruitment exercise, and that staff members of all nationalities should have equal opportunities to be promoted. It welcomed, in that regard, the Secretary-General's note on the issue (A/C.5/54/2) and had taken note of the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/54/450). Her delegation trusted that, in drawing up the programme of work, the Bureau would give due regard to its interest in that issue.

21. Finally, her delegation again urged the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to increase the representation of women from developing countries in policy-making posts.

22. **Mr. Fedorov** (Russian Federation) noted firstly that the Secretariat was not taking into account what had been decided in section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 53/221 and was issuing documents relating to human resources management without referring to that agenda item (as in the case of document A/C.5/54/17).

23. With regard to the note by the Secretary-General on personnel practices and policies (A/C.5/54/21), his delegation shared the concern expressed by the Group of 77, and saw a direct link between that note and the note concerning the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories (A/C.5/54/2). It was displeased that the Secretariat was attempting to turn a specific issue (to which it would revert subsequently) into a general problem, because that complicated the Secretariat's relationship with the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee. The Secretariat's interpretation of paragraph 103 of the report of the Advisory Committee differed from that of the Russian Federation, which considered that, if the Secretariat was called on to submit a general analysis of personnel policies implemented pursuant to

decisions of the General Assembly, that analysis should under no circumstances seek to modify decision-making procedures in the Fifth Committee.

24. It was also important for the Secretariat to provide, without any commission, comprehensive, detailed information on personnel issues before and during the consideration of human resources management; indeed, members of the Secretariat at all levels had the opportunity to do so at formal meetings of the Fifth Committee as well as in informal consultations on the coordination of future resolutions. Such a democratic procedure for preparing decisions on personnel issues, with direct and active participation by Secretariat representatives would allow the latter to keep delegations fully informed, which was very useful. However, his delegation opposed categorically attempts by the Secretariat to change or submit comments on provisions on which consensus had been reached prior to the adoption of decisions or draft resolutions.

25. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. With regard to section 27A (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management), he shared the concern already expressed by a number of delegations at the increase in the number of cases pending before the internal justice system. Regarding section 27B (Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts), he agreed with the Advisory Committee (A/54/7, para. VIII.12) that the funding of posts in the Peacekeeping Financing Division should be reviewed, since those posts in fact corresponded to functions of a permanent nature. As to section 27C (Office of Human Resources Management), he, too, considered that the Organization's recruitment procedures should be rendered less cumbersome, that consultants and experts should not be used to carry out functions that should be assigned to the Organization's permanent staff, and that the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) should be encouraged to step up its efforts to improve geographical representation.

26. Referring to the report of the Advisory Committee, he condemned the continued lack of transparency in the presentation of the resources required for staff training (A/54/7, para. VIII.25) and he called for an improvement in the presentation of the estimates for training for the next biennium. Regarding paragraph VIII.30, which he supported, he stated that no delegation of authority should take place without the prior approval of the General Assembly. He also endorsed paragraph VIII.43, which sought to differentiate in the budget between the resources required for maintenance, operational support and infrastructure upgrading and those required for investment in new technologies. Concerning paragraph VIII.47, he asked the Secretariat what the reasons were for the low number of IMIS users. He shared the view of the Advisory Committee (para. VIII.57) that priority should be given to services that were good candidates for common delivery using the criteria of efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness, and he supported the recommendation made in paragraph VIII.58. He wished to associate himself with the comments of the representative of Uganda concerning the travel agency and drew attention, in that connection, to the costliness of the tickets sold by the agency. Finally, he asked why nothing was being done to protect computer equipment at Headquarters.

27. With regard to paragraph VIII.99, he observed that asbestos was also a problem in the Headquarters compound in New York, and that the problem must be resolved before the Millennium Assembly. He asked what progress had been made in removing asbestos at Headquarters and what work was planned. He also wished to know why offices had not been vacated during the work carried out on the 39th floor of the Secretariat building, and how many asbestos-related illnesses had been reported to the Medical Service. He would like responses in writing.

28. Finally, his delegation demanded that the United Nations Office at Nairobi should have the same status as the other United Nations offices and that it should be provided with the necessary resources, including an interpretation service.

29. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that he attached great importance to the activities of the International Civil Service Commission relating to the common system. His delegation was concerned at the high vacancy rate and considered that the solution lay not so much in greater automation of OHRM (section 27C) as in the development of a genuine strategic vision. There was a lack, in the budget documents, of a strategic vision of the reforms, which should be aimed at providing the United Nations with a more efficient and flexible staff. It regretted the lack of clarity in the parts of the budget proposal dealing with training, which should form one element of the strategy to be put in place. It also noted

that there was no strategy for the use of new information technologies in human resources management. The granting of additional resources must be made conditional on progress in those areas.

30. Turning to section 27D (Office of Central Support Services), he reiterated his country's concern at the lack of a long-term, comprehensive and coordinated approach to investment in information technology in the United Nations. The lack of a link between the application of new technologies and reform was particularly disturbing at a time when it was necessary to identify the productivity gains that information technology was supposed to produce.

31. **Mr. Yussuf** (United Republic of Tanzania) asked why the terms "communications costs" and "communications needs" had been used in paragraph 27C.15 of the English version of the proposed programme budget. He also enquired as to the nature of the specialized supplies for which a provision of $10,400 was requested in paragraph 27C.17.

32. **Mr. Daka** (Zambia) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and supported the comments of the representatives of Uganda and Algeria. Like them, he wondered why the Organization continued to use only one travel agency and emphasized that OHRM must greatly improve recuritment procedures, which were no doubt the cause of the Organization's high vacancy rate.

33. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the questions put by the members of the Committee, indicated, with respect to the secretariat services provided to the Fifth Committee and CPC by the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management (section 27A), that the level of the resources allocated, which had barely changed since the previous biennium, did not in any way reflect the value of those services; everyone was fully aware of their importance.

34. Turning to section 27B, he confirmed that IMIS did not include a budgeting module. In order to prepare the budget the Secretariat used old software, due to be replaced, which was compatible with IMIS. First, however, Releases 3 and 4 of IMIS must be put in place everywhere.

35. He said that the reformulated narrative of section 27C (A/C.5/54/17) dealt only with the introduction to the section, since the Secretariat had decided that the rest of the text, including the passages concerning training, were essentially in compliance with resolution 53/221.

36. The Secretariat was pleased that Member States supported the enhancement of training activities and had taken note of their criticism of the lack of transparency in the passages concerning training in section 27C. It would endeavour to achieve greater clarity in future budget submissions. The communications costs referred to in paragraph 27C.15 related to routine expenditure for mail and telephone calls. Clarification regarding the special costs mentioned in paragraph 27C.17 would be provided in informal consultations.

37. With regard to the travel agency located at Headquarters (section 27D (Office of Central Support Services)), he said that the level of the rent paid by the agency was one of the elements in the contract concluded with it, which had enabled the Organization to obtain a rent of $731,200, or $208 per square foot, compared with rents of about $30 per square foot for offices in the surrounding area. When the Secretariat issued invitations to tender, which it had done on several occasions over the years, it made a genuine effort to find a travel agency offering tickets at competitive prices. The pricing structure for airline tickets, however, was complex, and the price indicated on the ticket did not necessarily reflect the price paid by the United Nations, which depended on offsets paid subsequently by the agency based on the volume of business.

38. The high vacancy rate in section 27D was not artificial. Recruitment had been conducted with the greatest possible transparency, as was the case for all the other sections. The budget performance report would explain the reasons for the high rate.

39. The Information Technology Services Division and the IMIS Service were two distinct entities within the Office of Central Support Services. IMIS was not yet installed everywhere, but the Secretariat anticipated that the five releases would be in place in all duty stations by the end of 2000. That would be the time to consider how to integrate the IMIS Service into the Information Technology Services Division. It would be necessary, in so doing, to take account of the fact that

IMIS also served the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organiztion (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to establish a procedure whereby the costs of the services provided could be charged to the users. The figure of 2,000 users would increase when the system was installed in all duty stations.

40. He said that he would reply in informal consultations to the questions on security, access to the optional disk system and asbestos. On the latter point, he said that he would enquire as to the circumstances of the incident mentioned at an earlier meeting.

41. The abolition of posts in the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) would not lead to a reduction in the capacity of the Office. As to the restructuring and strengthening of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), he recalled that the reform of UNON comprised a number of phases spanning several bienniums.

42. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) and **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said that they would request more detailed information on the issue of the travel agency in informal consultations.

43. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said, with regard to the incident involving asbestos, that the Group of 77 had sent a letter to the Secretariat, but had not received a reply.

44. **The Chairman** said that she took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations.

45. *It was so decided.*

Part IX: Internal oversight

Part X: Jointly financed administrative activities and special expenses

46. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) noted that estimates of expenditure under section 28 (Internal oversight) amounted to $18.9 million, that projected extrabudgetary resources amounted to $10.9 million and that five additional posts were requested under the regular budget.

47. Referring to paragraph IX.4 of the Advisory Committee's report, he said that there was a memorandum of understanding covering audit services provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. However, there were no such memoranda concerning investigation of funds and programmes. That situation had been perpetuated by the fact that no action had been taken on the report of the Secretary-General on enhancing the internal oversight mechanisms in operational funds and programmes (A/51/801). Until the report was acted on, no clear-cut arrangements could be instituted for reimbursement by the funds and programmes of investigative services provided by the Office. The Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the five posts requested but not the proposal to reclassify a P-5 post of Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General to the D-1 level (para. IX.5). In conclusion, he drew the attention of the Committee to the comments in paragraphs IX.7 to IX.10 of the report.

48. Introducing section 29 (Jointly financed administrative activities), which contained estimates to cover the expenses of various jointly financed bodies, including the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit, he referred to paragraphs X.2 to X.6 of the Advisory Committee's report. The Advisory Committee believed that there was a need for greater transparency in the manner in which those estimates were arrived at and the share to be borne by the Organization. There was also a need to ensure that estimates for the secretariats of a number of inter-agency bodies had appropriate legislative oversight. The Advisory Committee would take up those subjects when it met with the representatives of the specialized agencies on the subject of administrative and budgetary coordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

49. Paragraphs X.5 and X.6 of the report indicated the need for the Secretariat to take decisions only after proper consultation with the bodies concerned and after having received clear legislative guidance from the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

50. Paragraphs X.13 to X.16 of the report concerned the United Nations share of the cost of the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC). The Advisory Committee trusted that the recommendation

it had made in paragraph X.16 would lead to an urgent review of the effectiveness of ISCC.

51. With respect to section 30 (Special expenses) the Advisory Committee, in paragraph X.21, reiterated its recommendation that the Secretary-General should address, on a system-wide basis, the long-term implications of the growth of the cost of after-service health insurance. In paragraph X.23, the Advisory Committee also requested the Secretary-General to provide information, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, on the impact of implementation of the recommendations of OIOS contained in document A/53/467.

52. Paragraphs X.25 to X.27 of the report concerned staff security and the role of the United Nations Security Coordinator. The Advisory Committee strongly urged the organizations of the United Nations system carefully to coordinate their security and safety activities at the field level in order to avoid the potential for conflict in policy, activities and guidelines that might endanger the security and safety of United Nations personnel and family members. The Advisory Committee requested that comprehensive information on all safety and security programmes currently undertaken by the United Nations system should be included in the next proposed programme budget.

Section 28. Internal oversight

53. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 28 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection, she drew the Committee's attention to the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in paragraph 453 of its report (A/54/16).

54. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the programme and supported all the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) that were in conformity with the current regulations and rules of the Organization and the decisions of the General Assembly, that being a prerequisite for ensuring that its work was effective and that it enjoyed the confidence of Member States. However, the description of the Office's functions, in the foreword and introduction to the proposed programme budget and in the narrative of section 28, was not always in conformity with its mandate as defined in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B. That was true, notably, of paragraph 187 of the introduction, which stated that the Office evaluated the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization's activities, and the proposals set out in paragraphs 28.3, 28.20, 28.21, 28.24 and 28.41 of section 28. It was difficult to see, for example, on what basis the Office should monitor the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme. The Group pointed out that only those reforms that had been approved by the General Assembly should be implemented.

55. The Group of 77 and China endorsed the recommendations made by CPC in paragraph 453 of its report (A/54/16). However, they requested the Chairman of CPC to provide clarification with respect to paragraph 28.20 (b) as reformulated by that Committee. They wondered whether, should the General Assembly adopt the proposal, OIOS would be able to alter the content of main programmes. They also wondered what CPC meant by "main programmes".

56. The Group noted that the resources requested for the Office had increased from $13.8 million in 1996-1997 to $20.1 million in 2000-2001. It did not appear that that resource growth was justified, since internal oversight was not a priority under the medium-term plan and the General Assembly had not conferred any new mandates on the Office since 1994, when it had been established.

57. The Group also wished to know what the Secretariat meant by "insufficient delegation of authority" (A/54/7, para. IX.9). The Group considered that delegation of authority must proceed in accordance with resolution 53/221.

58. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, said that the European Union had strongly supported the activities of OIOS since its establishment. The drawing together of the main oversight functions, namely audit, management consulting, inspection, monitoring, evaluation and investigations, into a single structure had responded to the need to enhance internal oversight within the Organization and to respect the fundamental principle of operational independence.

59. The European Union considered that the Office's task was not to serve as a vehicle for budget cuts but to optimize the use of the Organization's resources and programme delivery. Experience had shown that the Office had enabled the Organization not only to make savings and recoveries (double the amount spent on the investigations), but also, more importantly, to change its management culture. It had been critical in turning the Organization into a more responsive, efficient, accountable and transparent structure. As the representative of Norway had stated in the general debate on the proposed programme budget, although internal oversight was not a programme and could not therefore be assigned priority, it was a powerful tool for management improvement that strengthened the hand of the Secretary-General in delivering priority programmes.

60. Under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, the Office had fully met the expectations of Member States as set forth in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B. The European Union was confident that it would continue to do so, and believed that it must be given the resources necessary to discharge its mandate.

61. The European Union therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of new posts, which had been approved by ACABQ. It took note of the Advisory Committee's comments (A/54/7, para. IX.5) concerning the proposed reclassifications and looked forward to further clarification of the matter in informal consultations. In its view, the resources requested for the Investigations Section were insufficient.

62. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria), aligning himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while his delegation recognized the importance of internal oversight and supported the activities undertaken in that connection, it wished to point out that they were not a priority under the medium-term plan. He questioned the need to increase appropriations under the section by 5.3 per cent, when no resource growth had been proposed for certain priority activities. Similarly, extrabudgetary resources had increased in section 28, while declining elsewhere.

63. His delegation believed that the Office should not become a cumbersome and bureaucratic administrative structure consuming ever more resources, when its function was actually to generate savings for the Organization. Some of the Office's activities were in fact financed under other sections of the programme budget. Thus, travel costs relating to auditing of certain peacekeeping operations were borne by the operations concerned.

64. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee's view, reflected in paragraph IX.5 of its report, that the reclassification of a P-5 post of Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General to the D-1 level was not justified. It supported the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IX.7 of its report that procedures should be in place for the coordination of the Office's various units with a view to promoting greater efficiency. Drawing attention to the request that the Office should monitor the implementation of the reform programme, he emphasized that the Office could monitor only those reforms that had been formally approved by the General Assembly.

65. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was important, in its opinion, that the Office should carry out its activities within its mandate and in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly.

66. His delegation considered it essential that the Office should use qualified and experienced staff in all its services so as to be able to discharge its mandate effectively, although that did not always appear to be the case. Since the Office had its own appointment and promotion body (A/54/6/Rev.1, para. 28.10), it wished to know to what extent that body had assisted the Office in filling vacancies.

67. It supported the establishment of new posts, but endorsed the views expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IX.5 of its report concerning the reclassifications. It also agreed with the opinion expressed in paragraph IX.7 that the structure of the Office must not be too cumbersome and elaborate. Uganda considered that the Board of Auditors, one of the Organization's most effective oversight bodies, was a good example in that regard. What mattered was that the Office should have a core of highly qualified and experienced staff who carried out their tasks effectively.

68. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation welcomed the budget estimates for and programme of work of OIOS for the biennium 2000-2001 and supported the recommendations of CPC on section 28. Since its establishment five years earlier, the Office had become an effective tool at the service of the Secretary-General and his programme managers. By drawing on the results of independent and objective evaluations, programme managers were able to discharge their mandates more effectively, making optimum use of the resources available to them.

69. Under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, the Office had also sought to bring to light cases of fraud, waste and misappropriation of funds, enabling the Organization to identify recoveries and savings of some $37 million in the past year alone, of which $23 million had actually been realized. Most importantly, the Office was a powerful deterrent.

70. His delegation took note of the comments of ACABQ in paragraph IX.5 of its report and requested the Advisory Committee to specify in writing the criteria on which those comments were based. It also took note of the additional information provided by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee concerning the procedures for cost reimbursement for services provided to the funds and programmes. While it understood the need for those arrangements, it wished to underline that they did not affect the authority of the Office with respect to the funds and programmes, which was clearly defined in resolution 48/218 B, as well as in a legal opinion provided by the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations.

71. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Reaffirming her delegation's commitment to the strengthening of internal oversight, she said that she considered it essential nevertheless that the intergovernmental bodies should have their say regarding the measures to be taken.

72. Her delegation wished to draw attention to the fact that the narrative of section 28 contained several references to reform measures, as though the Office had a specific mandate with respect to follow-up to such measures. She pointed that the Office's programme of work must be in conformity with the priorities established by Member States and that, since the reform programme had not been approved in its entirety, it would have been better to have avoided any reference to it.

73. Her delegation was concerned, as were other delegations, at the resource growth proposed for internal oversight activities. Those activities were not among the priorities under the medium-term plan, which, in contrast, had not always been respected. It wished to underline that the medium-term plan remained the principal policy directive governing the preparation of the budget and the distribution of resources among budget sections. The increase in the number of posts proposed under section 28 was another cause for concern. In that respect too, internal oversight activities seemed to enjoy preferential treatment in comparison with other programmes in the medium-term plan, which, however, were priorities. She considered that it would be advisable to take a cautious approach to the establishment of posts and to review the Office's real needs. Her delegation endorsed the comments made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IX.5 of its report.

74. It would be helpful, as several delegations had emphasized within CPC, to bring the narratives into line with the text of the medium-term plan. That was true particularly of the presentation of the activities of the Central Evaluation Unit and the Audit and Management Consulting Division. Likewise, the expected accomplishments must correspond to the objectives of the programme and to those set out in the medium-term plan.

75. In conclusion, she said that her delegation, which believed that OIOS must be a role model in terms of efficiency and economy, was astonished that the resources requested under section 28 continued to increase.

76. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) drew the Committee's attention to the fact that administrative support services and conference services, for example, were not among the designated priorities, despite the fact that they accounted for approximately half of the budget. Given the new mandates that had been conferred on the Organization since 1994 and, in particular, on OIOS, it was normal that expenditure relating to oversight activities should increase gradually in each biennium, with experience. The priorities established in the medium-term plan should not form the sole criterion in that regard. His delegation believed that it was important that the Office should have the necessary

resources and it considered that the increase requested was entirely justified.

77. He recalled that the auditors' fees were not charged to the Organization. He could not therefore understand how the budget of the Board of Auditors could be compared with that of OIOS.

78. **Mr. Takahara** (Japan) said that his delegation, which attached great importance to both the internal and external oversight functions, supported the proposals contained in section 28. However, it wished to make certain comments with a view to improving budget planning and the organization of the Secretariat's work.

79. His delegation would like to know what progress had been made with respect to self-monitoring and self-evaluation, which were mentioned in paragraph 28.3, and, in particular, to what extent the results of those activities were taken into account in the preparation of the budget proposal.

80. His delegation supported the request made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IX.4 of its report that additional information should be included in the next proposed programme budget on cost reimbursement for services to funds and programmes where there was currently no memorandum of understanding. It wished to know whether there was an urgent need to include the post of Planning and Compliance Officer in the budget, given the essential functions relating to that post (A/54/6/Rev.1, para. 28.12), and why it was proposed that the post should be established at the P-5, rather than a lower, level (A/54/7, para. IX.5).

81. Concerning the resources requested under travel (A/54/6/Rev.1, para. 28.15), his delegation considered that the request for a substantial increase in the appropriation must be justified by greatly increased activity. Finally, his delegation trusted that the "pervasive management control weaknesses across the Organization", referred to in paragraph 28.40 of the budget proposal and paragraph IX.9 of the Advisory Committee's report, would be identified and that measures would be taken to address them.

82. **Mr. Yussuf** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Referring to the financial implications of the recommendations of OIOS, he said that his delegation would like the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division to indicate, in informal consultations, the level of expenditure that each body audited had had to incur in order to implement the Office's recommendations.

83. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan), aligning himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his delegation attached great importance to section 28 and fully supported those internal oversight activities that were undertaken in conformity with the Organization's regulations and rules and the decisions of the General Assembly. It hoped, however, that the problems observed by Member States since the Office's establishment would be resolved by the end of the next biennium.

84. Since the existence of the Office should result in more prudent use of resources, his delegation was concerned to note that not only were the resources requested by OIOS increasing, but other services were requesting additional resources in order to give effect to the Office's recommendations. That was the justification given, for example, for the reclassification of a Field Service post to P-4 (A/54/7, para. V.38). His delegation wished to draw attention to several typographical errors and inconsistencies between the Advisory Committee's report and the proposed programme budget and requested the Secretariat to correct them. It wished to point out, in that connection, that the budget should not be issued as a supplement prior to its adoption by the General Assembly.

85. His delegation joined the United States delegation in requesting that the Advisory Committee should indicate the general criteria on which its recommendations concerning posts were based. It also hoped that the Secretariat would inform it why the savings identified and referred to in the annual report of OIOS (A/54/393) were not reflected in the budget performance report. Finally, it agreed with Canada that the Office must be provided with adequate resources, although what constituted an appropriate level was a matter of opinion.

86. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation considered internal oversight to be a core function; it therefore supported the request for additional resources for internal oversight made by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Committee on 27 October. The benefits that would accrue to the Organization from

such an investment would, in his opinion, far surpass the expenditures incurred.

87. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), responding to the comments of the representative of Guyana concerning the modifications to paragraph 28.20 (b) of the proposed programme budget recommended by CPC (A/54/16, para. 453 (b)), explained that CPC had simply taken the wording of paragraphs (a) and (b) of regulation 7.1 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME Rules), because that was the authoritative text on evaluation, which was the theme of subprogramme 1 and the subject of paragraph 28.20. The term "main programmes" referred to the major areas of activity of the United Nations, which were described in the programme budget.

88. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of regulation 7.1 of the PPBME Rules were to be interpreted in the light of regulation 7.4, under which Member States were entitled to make any modification to programmes that they wished. Thus, there was no reason to fear that changes would be initiated by the Secretariat. All modifications made were done so in conformity with the established regulations. Furthermore, modifications proposed by the Secretary-General were submitted to CPC, the Advisory Committee or the Committee on Conferences, as appropriate. Member States were right to be concerned at the issue since, in accordance with paragraph 4 of section II of General Assembly resolution 37/234, once the proposed programme budget had been adopted, the programme narratives contained therein constituted commitments against which programme performance was to be assessed.

89. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), noting the concerns expressed by delegations with regard to the narrative of the proposed programme budget and the recommendations of CPC, said that care had been taken, in drafting the proposed programme budget, to remain very close to the wording of the medium-term plan, which was in conformity with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/218.

90. Concerning cost reimbursement for services provided by OIOS (A/57/7, para. IX.4), he said that all sums received in that regard were reflected in the proposed programme budget, but the funds and programmes sometimes made payments in kind, which were difficult to show in the budget proposal. He hoped, however, that it would be possible to provide additional information on the matter in the next proposed programme budget.

91. With regard to the reclassification of the post that had been occupied until now by a gratis personnel (para. IX.5), he gave an assurance that the degree of responsibility of the post justified the level requested. As to the criteria for reclassifying posts, he said that all posts were classified on the basis of the Master Standard of the International Civil Service Commission. The Master Standard did not, however, constitute the sole criterion. Sometimes, in order to make better use of available resources, the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee and, on occasion, the Fifth Committee decided not to adhere strictly to it.

92. Referring to the recommendations of OIOS, he said that the Office provided estimates, in its annual report, of the savings that would result from the application of its recommendations. In many cases, those estimates concerned not the savings that could be realized against the estimates of expenditure contained in the budget when the Office made its recommendations but expenditures that might be avoided in the future, because the role of OIOS was to counter the risk of budgetary inflation. It was not possible to identify, after the fact, all the elements that came into play. Furthermore, it often took time to realize the savings sought. Currently, the Office made its estimates independently of the budget process.

93. Concerning the reclassification to P-4 of a Field Service post in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (para. V.38), he explained that, as shown in table 17.24 of the proposed programme budget, one Field Service post was to be lost in 2000-2001, while the number of P-3/4 posts would be reduced from 38 to 37. Since one P-4 post was to be reclassified and a P-3 post redeployed, as stated in paragraph 17.115, the number of staff would fall from 38 to 37, despite the reclassification of the Field Service post.

94. Regarding self-evaluation, which programme managers were expected to undertake regularly in accordance with the guidelines provided to them by OIOS (A/54/6/Rev.1, para. 28.3), he explained that, although the outcome of the evaluation might

sometimes lead to immediate action, in other cases, programme managers were obliged, in order to give effect thereto, to make proposals for the next biennium. Those proposals were duly taken into account in the corresponding sections of the proposed programme budget, even though their origin was not specified.

95. *Mr. Sial (Pakistan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

96. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that in fact he wished to know what criteria the Advisory Committee used to evaluate the Secretariat's proposals for reclassifications of posts. He expected to receive clarification in writing before the informal consultations.

97. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana) said that he trusted that the question he had put concerning delegation of authority (A/54/7, para. IX.9) would be taken up in the informal consultations.

98. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that some matters required in-depth consideration in informal consultations. The issue of the link between the preparation of the next programme budget and the priorities set out in the medium-term plan merited more detailed consideration, perhaps even as a separate issue. As to the interpretation of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, her delegation wished to emphasize that revision of the objectives and modification of the content of programmes were the prerogative of Member States and that the Secretariat played an auxiliary role in that regard. That issue should be examined more closely in informal consultations.

99. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 28 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration.

100. *It was so decided.*

Section 29. Jointly financed administrative activities

101. **The Chairman** invited the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to take the floor, in accordance with article 20 of the statute of the Unit.

102. **Mr. Ouedraogo** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) said that, in accordance with the Unit's zero growth policy for the biennium 2000-2001, the estimates of expenditure, which amounted to $7,863,100 (A/54/6/Rev.1, table 29.6) before recosting, remained unchanged from the appropriations for the biennium 1998-1999. Recalling that the staff resources assigned to JIU had been unchanged since 1968, he expressed the hope that the prospect of an increase could be contemplated in the near future with the full support of the Fifth Committee, as the Unit had already requested.

103. The United Nations share in the cost of the Unit was expected to increase from 19.95 per cent in the biennium 1998-1999 to 33.8 per cent for the biennium 2000-2001, representing an amount of $2,657,800 (table 29.8), should the General Assembly approve the Secretary-General's proposal to reincorporate in the United Nations share the shares of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As noted by the Advisory Committee in paragraph X.5 of its report, the Secretariat had decided without the authorization of the General Assembly or the bodies concerned, that, starting with the biennium 1996-1997, the United Nations would no longer assume responsibility for the shares of those two bodies.

104. He reiterated that the independence of the Unit could be compromised by the fact that its initial budget proposals were submitted to the secretariats of the participating organizations before being presented to the General Assembly. Although that practice was in conformity with article 20.1 of the statute of the Unit, it was also stipulated, in the same article, that the budget estimates should be submitted to the Assembly together with the related reports of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Advisory Committee. The idea was thus to allow the secretariats to air their views, but to leave the last word to the General Assembly. When it considered the budget estimates of JIU, however, the Fifth Committee never had before it the Unit's initial proposals or the report of ACC.

105. He suggested that a budget line entitled "Non-staff compensation" should be included in the table showing the Unit's requirements by object of expenditure (table 29.6), following the method adopted for the Advisory Committee in table 1.8 of the

proposed programme budget and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in table 29.3. Such a solution would avoid giving the impression that the resources requested under the heading "Posts", which in the current proposed programme budget also included the emoluments of the Inspectors, covered only the cost of the established posts indicated in the table showing post requirements (table 29.7).

106. In its report on the review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery (A/54/288), the Unit had recommended that the General Assembly should consider, through the Advisory Committee, and then approve, on behalf of the United Nations system, the overall level of the budgets proposed for all jointly financed administrative activities and not just for ICSC and JIU. As stated in paragraph 100 of the report, the shares of participating organizations in the costs of each of the jointly financed activities were agreed upon among ACC members without the governing bodies of those organizations having an opportunity to question their share and without legislative supervision, although the cost-sharing arrangements became as much of a commitment for Member States as the scale of assessments for the overall budget of individual organizations. The Unit therefore supported the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph X.4 of its report that the full cost should be given for each of the jointly financed administrative activities so that the General Assembly could review those costs on behalf of the United Nations system as a whole, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 17 of the Charter.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.